

Whodunit?

The Murder of Philip II of Macedon

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The murder of Philip II of Macedon has been a whodunit since ancient times. The list of suspect conspirators runs the gamut from simply the murderer Pausanias, to the Lyncestian brothers, to the Persian King, to Olympias, to Alexander and to Amyntas IV. Historians tend to believe that Pausanias did not act alone because they question his motive and suspect a mastermind behind his action (Develin 89). Yet before examining each party possibly associated with the murder, it is important to examine the basic account of what happened.

The traditional telling of the murder begins with Pausanias, once Philip's lover, who had been replaced in the king's affections with another young man also named Pausanias. Out of jealousy, the first Pausanias accused the second Pausanias of being a hermaphrodite. Unable to bear the insult, the latter killed himself in battle protecting Philip (Diodorus 16.93.4-6). Attalus, a friend of the second Pausanias, invited the first to dinner, plied him with alcohol, and gave him to the muleteers to rape as a response to the suicide (Diod. 16.93.7). Outraged, Pausanias went to the king to complain. Philip did not punish Attalus, for reasons varying from his relation to Cleopatra, Philip's new wife, to the monarch's need of Attalus' services, whether in internal politics or in the upcoming Persian war (Diod. 16.93.9). According to Diodorus, Philip did attempt to mollify Pausanias with gifts and increased honour among the bodyguards (Diod. 16.93.9), while Justin said Philip put him off with excuses, and not without ridicule (Justin 9.6.6). Pausanias, we are told, henceforth "nursed his wrath implacably, and yearned to avenge himself, not only on the one who had done him wrong, but also on the one who failed to avenge him" (Diod. 16.94.1).

Then came the wedding of Philip's daughter Cleopatra to Alexander of Epirus in 336 BC. There was much commotion and many guests including "leading members of the Greek Community, personal friends from the Greek states, notables from the Balkan Empire and of course leading Macedonians" (Hammond 1994: 176). Here Pausanias got his chance: planting escape horses at the city gates, he stabbed Philip with a dagger while the king was entering the theatre alone and unguarded, only to be killed himself by Philip's bodyguards in his ensuing flight (Diod.

16.94.3-4). Afterwards, Heromenes and Arrabaeus, sons of Areopus, were also tried and executed for Philip's death. Later, Alexander the Great also claimed that the assassination was the mastermind of the Persian king (Arrian 2.14.5), while other sources connect Olympias and/or Alexander with the murder (Plutarch *Alex.* 10).

Thus, Philip II of Macedon died at the hands of Pausanias, a member of his bodyguard. Although some see Pausanias' anger and need for revenge as proof that he acted alone, since ancient times there has been a cloud of suspicion cast on both Philip's wife Olympias and his son Alexander. The questions remain: did Pausanias act of his own volition, or did he have fellow conspirators backing him? Many had the motive, but who had the opportunity and the audacity to commit the crime? Either acting alone or together, the main list of possible culprits includes Pausanias alone, the Lyncestian brothers, the Persians, Olympias, Alexander, and Amyntas IV.

First it is important to consider the sources. The main sources for the death of Philip are Diodorus and Justin's *Epitome of Pompeius Trogus*. In addition, we have a short account by Plutarch in his *Life of Alexander*. Aristotle's brief mention of the event in his *Politics* is the only contemporary account which can serve to reinforce or enlighten the more comprehensive accounts. Both Diodorus and Trogus wrote in the time of Augustus, but they did not use the same sources for their projects (Hammond 1991: 504). Consequently, their information diverges at times. For instance, Pausanias at the time of the rape is showed by Justin to be a youth, while in Diodorus he is a mature man (Hammond 1991: 504). Of the two sources, Diodorus is generally taken as the more reliable one. Justin (Trogus) is sensational and is based on Cleitarchus, who was considered "careless of the truth, a scandalmonger and a popular writer" (Hammond 1991: 504). Not only was Trogus' source unreliable, but Justin was also selective in what he recorded, having "excerpted from his forty-four published volumes all the most noteworthy material [...] and] omitted what did not make pleasurable reading or to serve to provide a moral" (Justin 1.1.4).

Let us begin with our only contemporary source for Philip's slaughter. According to Aristotle "Philip was slain by Pausanias for neglecting to revenge him of the affront he had received from Attalus" (Aristotle 1311b). Aristotle uses this assassination as an example in which a citizen, provoked by an outrageous and offensive action by the king, attacked the monarch not from political ambition but for pure revenge. There is little reason to doubt Aristotle's testimony as he was highly familiar with the Macedonian court, with the dynamics behind the scenes, with the political players, with the people involved, and with this particular event. Even though Aristotle establishes a personal motive, this does not prevent Pausanias from having other backers or conspirators (Lindsay 77).

Diodorus agrees with Aristotle, and sees the murder as the result of Pausanias' private initiative. The difference between them is that while Aristotle merely mentions the occurrence, Diodorus gives a fuller account. Diodorus makes neither reference nor allusion to conspirators, saying only that Pausanias was encouraged by the advice of the sophist Hermocrates (Diod. 16.93.1). Both Diodorus and Aristotle claim Pausanias' motive was revenge because of a personal vendetta against Philip, his former lover, who would not redress the sexual humiliation Pausanias had suffered at Attalus' instigation.

One important question must be asked: who was Pausanias? Behind the image of spurned lover, rape victim, and assassin was a nobleman from Orestis; "a bodyguard, one of the noblest in the land" (Badian 247). Modern scholars often assume that Pausanias was a man who had lost his mind, referring to him as a "psychopath," or "demented" and "unbalanced;" a man with a "deranged mind" (Frears 123-4). Yet the ancient sources do not make Pausanias a madman, and seem to believe that his personal motive is legitimate and that lucid planning goes into executing such a revenge. One has to consider that "the job was planned . . . [and] not, as has often been said, the act of a man stung beyond reason" (Develin 89).

Other than infatuation with conspiracy theories, one reason why modern historians are unsatisfied with Pausanias' personal motive is that his rape may have occurred eight years prior to his assassination of Philip (Badian 247). The rape is dated by the corresponding Illyrian war fought at the time, and the last Illyrian war mentioned by Diodorus is dated in 344 BC. This date is also supported by Justin (Frears 121). The Illyrian war is not directly connected to the rape of Pausanias, but to the suicide of the second Pausanias. Yet because the next topic breached by Diodorus was the rape, historians have automatically connected the two. Perhaps the rape was simply the next significant event that tied into Diodorus' narrative, which makes it possible that "it was at an indefinite but later date [after the second Pausanias' suicide] that Attalus added insult to injury by that famous outrage" (Frears 122). Furthermore, it is possible that there was another Illyrian war later which went unmentioned by the sources, perhaps because it was very minor, or because it paled in comparison to other events rocking the Macedonian court. The Illyrians were a constant problem for the Macedonians and it is not a stretch of the imagination that there was some trouble with them in the latter part of Philip's reign.

It does seem like Pausanias' rape must have been some time between the marriage of Philip and Cleopatra (late 338/ early 337) and the sending of an advance military force into Asia in the spring of 336, rather than almost a decade earlier (Frears 120). If this is the case, Philip refrained from punishing Attalus for two reasons (Diod. 16.93.9). First, Attalus was a close relation of Cleopatra, who had just then become Philip's wife. If the rape had occurred eight years earlier, Cleopatra would have still been a child, and it is far less likely that Philip would have been as forgiving. Second, Attalus remained unpunished because he was about to lead a campaign into Asia on behalf of Philip. It is doubtful that Philip had planned the Asian campaign eight years in advance so accurately as to choose its commanders, and was so tied to such a plan so as to feel unable to switch them in the eight years before the campaign. Thus, Pausanias' rape must have occurred after Philip's marriage to Cleopatra and before Attalus left for Asia. Moreover the brutal nature of the attack suggests his reason for revenge was not eight years in the past, but fresh and festering for only a few months.

In any case, as Elizabeth Carney points out, "concern about the date of the rape is not terribly relevant: victims of rape do not forget in a year or two; they brood; the experience tends to affect them the rest of their lives" (Carney 1992: 181). It is easy to see how Pausanias' rape was traumatizing, as he was subject not only to Attalus' "carnal desires but, like a prostitute, to those of his fel-

low diners as well, so making the boy an object of universal ridicule amongst his peers" (Justin 9.6.6). Thus, regardless of the precise date of Pausania's rape, it is nonetheless a valid source for the motive of revenge and therefore should not be lightly dismissed.

Another reason historians doubt the credibility of Pausania's motive of revenge is, as Ernest Badian points out, because "Pausania's grievance was against Attalus, who had inflicted the insult on him and who was at that time in Asia (Philip came into it only indirectly, as not having punished Attalus (Badian 247))". Yet it seems probable that he struck when Attalus was in Asia, "because the thought of his enemy winning glory in the field drove Pausania into action [. . .] enraged by Philip's bestowal of new honours upon Attalus, Pausania decided to regain honour and glory by striking down Philip, false judge and greatest man in the world" (Fears 123). Obviously, Pausania hated Attalus, and resented his humiliation while "his enemy was honoured with the rank of general" (Justin 9.6.7). So why was Philip his target? Philip was his former lover, who not only let the degradation of his body and honour go unpunished and thus passively permitted the ridicule of Pausania to continue, but also contributed to his enemy's honour and prestige by sending him on a glorious preliminary mission to Asia. This was gross aggravation to the insult he had already received.

One must also consider how much of a good tale the assassination of Philip actually is. The successful conqueror was about to embark on the greatest of all missions: the conquest of Asia. His fame, power, and glory increased with every passing day. Yet, on the eve of his departure, his former lover, who felt he had been wronged by not having his honour avenged, swiftly and effectively killed him. Pausania's story is indeed dramatic, and "his crime fits into the tradition of regicide in Macedonia and has elements in common with other such crimes: concern for masculine sexual honour; a mixture of motives both political and personal but characterized by ancient sources as personal alone; a desire merely to eliminate the ruler, not necessarily to replace him with any particular candidate" (Carney 1992: 182). The presence of this motif throughout Macedonian history gives credence to Pausania's motives because his actions had a precedent in the past.

Pausania was part of a society that remembered the past vividly. In the recent past, there was the assassination of king Archelaus, ruler of Macedon from 413 to 399, who was also murdered at the hands of a former lover (Lindsay 77). Some see this as evidence that "elements of the story of the assassin of Philip have been stereotyped" (Lindsay 77). Perhaps Pausania, knowing what had happened before, was acting on precedent. Greeks took pride in their past, but they continually tried to surpass former glory. Knowing the story of the assassination of king Archelaus, Pausania could do no less to avenge his honour than his predecessor did. It is true that "the story of Pausania of Orestis smacks of the sensational: it is a sordid tale of homosexual lust, rape and vengeful murder [. . . but] while it undoubtedly suffers from embellishments, much remains that is highly plausible" (Heckel 56).

It is evident from all the sources that Philip died solely at Pausania's hands, and that Pausania's motive was revenge. Yet the question then arises whether he was egged on by anyone, or if anyone else was part of a plot with him. It is Diodorus' mention of waiting "horses" (Diod. 16.93.3), as opposed to just one horse for just one person, which has led scholars to believe that Pausania must

have had at least one more person in league with him.¹ Other than Pausania, the people most suspected of doing away with Philip (Olympias, Alexander, the Lyncestians, and Amyntas), are given political motivations; mainly wanting to replace Philip in the seat of power. However, these people would have wanted to remain in Macedon to seize control of the situation and the government. Moreover, running away in itself would have been an undesirably incriminating act. Thus the horses do not shed light on conspirators, but do attest that Pausania at least had an assistant of some sort, since he left the horses at the city gates and would probably not leave them unattended and risk the chance of them being stolen (Develin 89). Yet an assistant does not necessitate someone who knows of the plot, or an accomplice, and horses are not needed for someone who simply plotted and encouraged action. Thus the 'horses' do not clarify whether or not Pausania acted alone.

Why, then, is a conspiracy theory so plausible? Pausania's murder of Philip II did not occur in a political vacuum, but in the Macedonian court; and where there is a court, there is action behind the scenes. It is evident that Pausania was not the only person who had anger and resentment towards Philip II; others had their own personal or political motives to want him dead. Macedonia around the time of Philip's murder was a web of tangled desires and resentments, and somehow, two of three Lyncestian brothers got caught up in it.

After the death of Pausania two sons of Areopos, Heromenes and Arrabaeus, were put to death for Philip's murder. A third brother, Alexander the Lyncestian, managed to escape punishment (Arrian 1.25.1). In fact, while his two brothers were executed, he went on to have a position of honour under Alexander. This was not because he was innocent, as we know that "though he had incurred blame Alexander let him off for the nonce, since he had been among the first of his friends to rally to him on Philip's death" (Arrian 1.25.1). It is clear that at the time, all three Lyncestians were seen as guilty, though one escaped death by quickly and unequivocally supporting Alexander at a time when he needed supporters. After all, at the time of the murder, "it was regarded as certain that he had also, with Pausania, conspired to kill Philip" (Quintus Curtius 7.1.6), but because he supported Alexander and because he was the son-in-law of Antipater (the general who also supported Alexander), he was exempted from punishment.

However, the deaths of the two brothers cannot be attributed to Alexander alone, for even the king did not have the power to kill his subjects whenever it pleased him. Alexander acted essentially as an elected official; the 'head of state.' Trials were still done "in accordance with the ancient custom of the Macedonians, the king conducted the inquiry into criminal cases, and the army passed judgment [. . .] and the power of the king availed nothing" (Curtius 6.8.25). Alexander prosecuted at the trial of the Lyncestian Alexander's two brothers, but the choice whether to convict or not and what the penalty was to be lay with the Macedonians (Hammond 1994: 177). The two Lyncestians were thus not Alexander's scapegoats, but judged guilty by a large jury of soldiers and ex-soldiers. Alexander did not prosecute Alexander son of Areopos because of his quick support of

¹ N.G.L. Hammond in *Philip of Macedon*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994: 178; R. Develin in "The Murder of Philip II." *Antichon* 15 (1981): 89.

him, thus being the Lyncestian's saving grace. Yet, we do learn later during Alexander's Persian campaign, that "while Alexander was busied about Pharselis, he received news that his namesake, son of Areopus, was mediating treachery" (Arrian 1.25.1). It seems, thus, that treachery was not something beyond this Alexander. When Arrian reveals the more recent treachery of Alexander son of Areopus to Alexander the Great, he mentions as a side note the complicity of Heromenes and Arrabaeus in Philip's murder. This does seem to imply that the more recent treachery is a return to the past treachery in the time of Philip.

The Lyncestians are most often presented as scapegoats in the murder, some sort of cover up by Alexander to protect either himself, or his mother. But in ancient times the Lyncestians were evidently seen as guilty enough to be convicted for the murder by a large assembly of men. It is known that Lyncestis, a kingdom in the Pidnus mountains and a neighbour of Macedonia, had been both a traditional rival and often-unwilling subject of the kings at Pella, and was only brought under the Macedonian umbrella during Philip II's reign (Badian 248). The resentment towards Philip II must have been great, and perhaps the Lyncestian brothers believed that with Philip's death the Macedonian domination of their kingdom would end. There may have been a precedent made for the brothers, sons of Areopus, in the figure of another Aeropus, on the Macedonian throne around the end of the sixth century BC (Justin 7.2.5), and yet another Areopus, possibly a Lyncestian usurper of the Macedonian throne who reigned circa 398/7-395/4 BC (Carney 1980: 25).

In any case, Macedonia had a long history of trouble with her northern neighbours. It is also known that when Alexander became king, he "found his realm greatly envied and hated of dangerous enemies [. . .] the barbarous nations that were near neighbours onto Macedon, could not abide the bondage of strangers, but desired to have their natural kings" (Plut. *Alex.* 11). According to A.B. Bosworth, these feelings of resentment were held in check for a while. In his opinion, this was because Olympias ruled the household and the dynasty looked like it would be half Epirote, and so half Northern stock, but the anger resurfaced when Philip married Cleopatra, because "the royal house was no longer a blend of east and west but a dynasty of the plain, and the Upper Macedonians [. . .] may have felt threatened with eclipse rather than incorporation into the regime" (Bosworth 1971: 102). Whether this or the simple quest for freedom was the motive of the possible action of the Lyncestians is a moot point. The fact remains that there was considerable tension emanating from Lyncestis, which is one reason why the Lyncestian brothers should not be set aside as innocent. They may very well have been conspirators in Philip's murder.

Once Pausanias and the Lyncestians were dead, Alexander the King did point the finger at one more culprit. Alexander wrote to Darius, the Great King, saying "my father was murdered by conspirators, whom you instructed, as you yourselves boasted in your letter, before all the world" (Arrian 2.14.5). There is no denying that Pausanias' timing was good for Persia, which was not terribly strong, and about to be invaded by Philip. Yet if the Persians were guilty, then they would have had to have a connection in Macedonia. This covert alliance seems unlikely however, for "we have no shadow of evidence of any connections between Macedonian nobles and the national enemy, until some of them were driven to it by Alexander's initial purge" (Badian 248).

Although we do not actually hear of Macedonian nobles dealing with Persia, that may be because it is doubtful that we would. After all, Philip was about to invade their territory, and any Macedonian noble dealing with the Persians would probably not openly do so. Then again, Alexander of Lyncestis was caught later once more in some form of treachery. This time, we hear that "if he would assassinate Alexander the King, that the Persian king would give him the throne of Macedonia and a thousand golden talents to boot" (Arrian 1.25.5). Did the Persian king approach Alexander because he had been in the past amenable to such an arrangement? Although later duplicity cannot retroactively condemn him, it at least suggests that Alexander is a viable suspect who saved himself by quick thinking. In any case, it is interesting that the two other parties accused of Philip's murder, beyond the obviously guilty Pausanias, came together at a later date to try to assassinate Alexander. Perhaps they were not were innocent on the previous occasion?

Who else could have been involved? Even from ancient times there were suspects in the murder other than Pausanias and the Lyncestians, notably Philip's wife Olympias and his son Alexander. The basis of these accusations rests on the alleged deterioration of relations between Philip and Olympias, and consequently between Philip and Alexander. The main proof of this deterioration is encapsulated in four events: Philip's marriage to Cleopatra; Attalus' wish for a real heir; the Pixodarus affair; and the marriage of Philip's daughter Cleopatra to Alexander of Epirus.

In the year 338 BC, or early on in 337 BC, Philip married his last wife, Cleopatra. She was a young maiden, a Macedonian aristocrat, possibly with royal Argead blood, and Attalus' niece, with whom Philip had purportedly become completely enamoured (Plut. *Alex.* 9). Their marriage was a reason for conflict between Philip and his wife Olympias, because it could produce a fully Macedonian heir who could displace her son Alexander. This heir would not merely be another son, but would be the only son who was completely Macedonian, and not half-barbarian like Alexander, and so more legitimate. It was possible that Alexander would live past his bloom of youth and later be supplanted by a younger man. Possibly, Alexander was "spared in the meantime, so that the kingdom might not be left without an immediate successor (for Philip clearly wanted a son of his own to succeed him, and Alexander was the only one who had the necessary character and experience), [but] he knew that he would be safe only until Philip's new wife bore a son-or, at the most, until that son was ready to be trained for succession" (Badian 246).

Attalus was the one who brought this possibility to light. Plutarch relates that "the chiefest cause that provoked Alexander, was Attalus at the marriage of Cleopatra" (Plut. *Alex.* 9). What happened on this occasion was that Attalus, deep into his cups, prayed "to the gods, that they might have a lawful heir of Philip and Cleopatra, to succeed him in the kingdom of Macedon" (Plut. *Alex.* 9), thereby vocally deprecating Alexander's legitimacy. In reaction, an outraged Alexander threw his cup at Attalus and responded with: "Why, traitor, what am I? Dost thou take me for a bastard?" (Plut. *Alex.* 9). Philip then got up, drew his sword, and from sickness and drink he fell to the ground, or was prevented from attacking Alexander by his friends. Although it is doubtful that so close to his departure for Asia Philip would want to convey the idea that the succession was shaky and unstable (Carney 1992: 175), his reaction at the wedding feast did not convey that it was an established sub-

ject. In any case, Alexander left Macedon with his mother, taking her to Epirus, and himself going to the Illyrians. It must be pointed out that Alexander would only have been able to have such freedom of movement with the permission of Philip (Hammond 1994: 173).

The next significant event, according to the ancient authors, was when Pixodarus, a prince of Caria, wanted to ally with Philip and so offered his eldest daughter in marriage to Philip's son Aridaeus (Plut. *Alex.* 10). Alexander's friends and mother kindled Alexander's insecurity by telling him that Philip was trying to advance Aridaeus with such a strategic marriage and in so doing, was intending to displace Alexander. Thus Alexander wrote Pixodarus and offered himself in Aridaeus' place. Upon learning of this, Philip strongly reprimanded Alexander, saying that Alexander "was unworthy to be left his heir after his death, if he would cast himself away, marrying the daughter of a Carian, that was a slave and subject of a barbarous king" (Plut. *Alex.* 10). Afterwards, Philip exiled some of Alexander's companions.

The sources say these events caused dissention among the royal family. Arrian furthermore tells us that "Alexander had various suspicions towards Philip, because Philip had taken Eurydice to wife, and had treated with contumely Olympias the mother of Alexander" (Arrian 3.6.5). The very nature of polygamy implies insecurity upon every new marriage, and Alexander, a young man attached to his mother, was probably highly sensitive to see his father marry a woman whose importance could rival his mother's. Philip was polygamous and "used royal marriages both to build internal stability and to extend Macedonia's power" (Carney 2000: 57). A marriage to a Macedonian would probably secure things at home as he readied to leave for Asia, and was probably a tactical alliance rather than a love match that challenged Olympias' dominant position (Carney 2000: 57). Granted, the new bride was a Macedonian aristocrat, but Olympias was still mother of the heir. This is what gave her status, and this did not change. What also gave her prominence and influence was her strong personality. This is also why she caught the negative attention of the sources, but her status remained. This can be seen later, in the wars of the successors, because even after Alexander's death, she remained a strong political force by virtue of her will and being his mother.

What is interesting to note is that Arrian calls Philip's last wife Eurydice instead of Cleopatra, for Eurydice was also the name of Philip's mother. It is therefore possible, as N.G.L. Hammond suggests, that Philip conferred the traditional dynastic name Eurydice upon his new bride to raise her in status above Olympias, the mother of the heir, suggesting that Cleopatra was the future mother of the future heir (Hammond 1994: 173). On the other hand, pseudonyms were extremely common among Macedonian royal women. Plutarch asserts that Olympias actually began with the name Polyxena, and only later nicknamed Myrtale, Olympias, and Stratonice (Carney 2000: 63). Justin simply asserts that Olympias began as Myrtale (Justin 9.7.13), but nevertheless supports the changing of names. The naming and renaming of royal women indicates that these names functioned as quasi-titles and denoted status (Carney 2000: 63). If this is so, then even though the title of Eurydice relates Cleopatra to Philip's mother, Polyxena was named Olympias, which perhaps denoted a close connection to the gods, and thus perhaps retaining her high status amongst Philip's wives.

Furthermore, the fact that Cleopatra and Alexander of Epirus were married is also seen as a

reaction to dissent within the Macedonian royal family. The marriage is seen by some to have been a deliberate attempt by Philip, Olympias, and by implication Alexander, to secure support from Macedonians who favoured Cleopatra. In this view, Philip negated the backing she could have had from home, and also now had a new alliance with Epirus independent of her. Thus she was no longer a factor in securing good relations with Epirus on the eve of his departure for Asia. This comes from Justin's (Trogus') statement that "Olympias was also trying to induce her brother Alexander, the king of Epirus, to go to war, and she would have succeeded if Philip had not forestalled him by giving him his daughter in marriage" (Justin 9.7.7). Yet, this statement must be mistaken. Epirus could not have conceivably been the grounds of support of Olympias and Alexander if they should turn against Philip. Alexander of Epirus had grown up at the Macedonian court, and was set up as king of Epirus by none other than Philip II, which already in effect made him a client king of sorts. Since Philip was accumulating one victory after another, and Macedonia was growing in fame and size, why would Alexander of Epirus risk confronting the military superpower of Macedon for the sake of a woman, albeit his sister, when he would only lose in the initiative? This marriage probably did little if nothing to destabilize Olympias' position in the Macedonian court.

The positions and concerns of Olympias and Alexander are both interrelated and interdependent. Her high status was based on her son as heir, and on his success. Olympias is consequently considered the major suspect by both ancient sources and modern sources. Plutarch states that "of this murder, most men accused Queen Olympias, who (as is reported) allured this young man, having just cause of anger, to kill [Philip]" (Plut. *Alex.* 10). Thus Plutarch paints a picture whereby Olympias, knowing of Pausanias' resentment and anger towards Philip prodded him to take action and kill her husband, and was actually the mastermind behind the assassination. In support of Olympias' guilt we also find Atheneaus, who, although he gives a different reason, says the murder was a result of domestic squabbles that occurred at her own instigation (Lindsay 76). Justin also makes Olympias guilty (Justin 9.7.1). Why is she such a choice assassin according to so many ancient and modern writers? It is true that she must have felt some resentment towards Philip and his young bride Cleopatra, and some concern at the future position of her son. It is true that she most probably did have some influence with her son Alexander, and did have a voice and strong personality which she exercised in politics. But does she deserve the negative tradition attributed to her? These sources are extraordinarily biased against her, and these biases have permeated into modern times.

It is believed that "a propaganda campaign waged by Cassander in order to excuse his murder of Olympias is the origin of the hostile tradition about Olympias."² This campaign, though, was largely successful because ancient public opinion was already presupposed to be against her, first because of prejudice to women operating the political sphere which was traditionally occupied by men; and second because of hostility toward monarchy and polygamy.

As a woman who tried to participate in politics, Olympias "in no way conformed to Greek expectations about conventional female behaviour" (Carney 1987: 36). Men participated in public

² Tarn in Elizabeth Carney, "The Politics of Polygamy: Olympias, Alexander and The Murder of Philip." *Historia* 41 (1992): 186.

life, and women were relegated to private life, and these were two worlds that could not mix (Carney 1993: 33). Although the basic unanimity in the sources makes it fair to say that she probably did have a powerful character, and probably was determined and ruthless, the same things were said of her son. For a man, however, these were qualities and not character defects (Carney 1987: 40-1). Ironically, the same qualities that made Alexander "The Great" also made Olympias one of history's villains. Consequently, it seems as if "the antipathy her unconventionality inspired in the Greek world is a cultural assessment, not an eternal truth" (Carney 1993: 33).

Unease with the monarchy was directly tied to the place of polygamy, and women, within the system. Women played an important role in the succession, and some like Olympias did have a voice in politics, which was not well looked upon. Women could only have some political power under a monarchy, and under a polygamous monarchy they had more power. Thus, the hostility to such a system, and to the women who gained some power in it, is not surprising. Plutarch, for instance, says that Philip's polygamous marriages created quarrels between his wives that infected his kingdom (Plut. *Alex.* 9). In fact, "all of Theopompus, Satyrus, Athenaeus have a moralistic emphasis when dealing with Philip, showing him as a degenerate, vice-filled, and a polygamous court ruled and destroyed by women" (Lindsay 56). The Greek writers of the time may have been trying to denigrate Philip by accusing Olympias of being a horrible woman because Philip permitted such a woman to be (to a certain extent), active in the male domain of politics. Not only that, but it was she who also gave birth to Alexander, whom many considered a scourge to Greek freedom. Being ruled by an evil woman like Olympias was a further construct not only out of fear of women, but also as a means to denigrate both Philip and Alexander.

Olympias is portrayed as notoriously evil, cruel, vicious, and ruthless in the sources. She is shown as a woman who would stop at nothing to get what she wanted, and who would eliminate anyone who stood in the way of her ambition. Olympias was seen as "a jealous woman, fretting, and of a revenging mind" (Plut. *Alex.* 9), full of "sexual depravity" (Justin 9.5.9). This vicious and almost bloodthirsty nature of hers permeates both the personal descriptions of her and her actions, as "on the death of Philip, his infant son by Cleopatra, the niece of Attalus, was along with his mother dragged by Olympias onto a bronze vessel and burned to death... Afterwards Olympias killed Aridaeus also" (Pausanias 8.7.7). This description is very vivid; people believed Olympias was evil, made sure this belief carried on in their works, and thus they spread this belief. Modern descriptions are not more flattering; the woman is still seen as implacable (Heckel 56).

It is true that Olympias did commit political murder. We know that she killed Cleopatra and her son, Aridaeus and his wife Adea Eurydice, and other political enemies after Alexander's death. Yet this was not unknown in Macedonian politics, what was threatening was the perpetrator of the act was a female. Accordingly, it seems that the condemnation of Olympias' murders "derive from the expectation that Olympias should have been nice and obviously was not, whereas no one bothers to condemn the equally ruthless and brutal actions of male Macedonians because no one expects them to be nice" (Carney 1993: 41). Yet, she is not the only Macedonian woman who played in power politics: Philip's mother Eurydice was also vilified as a woman who killed her own children

and "sacrificed [them] to her lust" (Justin 7.5.7). It is not clear what her aim was supposed to have been, but she is depicted as wicked, pitiless, and merciless. Either all of the women who stood out in the Macedonian political arena were evil and vicious, or hostile sources portrayed them as such because they were women infringing upon male affairs.

Thus, Olympias' incrimination in the sources is most probably a result of bias and culture rather than actual duplicity. It is true that she had something in common with the actual murderer, since "like Olympias, Pausanias of Orestis was jilted by Philip and insulted by Attalus" (Heckel 56). It is also true that she had a strong and perhaps difficult personality, and was politically involved, sometimes ruthlessly. Nevertheless, these characteristics cannot condemn her as Philip's murderer. For these qualities describe at least one other suspect, Alexander, if not all, in the case. Olympias' personality traits and attributed motives are not enough evidence to make her guilty of Philip's murder.

When Olympias was incriminated, so was Alexander, as their fates and fortunes were interlinked to some degree. Plutarch related that "Alexander also went not clear from suspicion of this murder" (Plut. *Alex.* 10), supposedly prompting Pausanias to kill Philip, Cleopatra, and Attalus (Plut. *Alex.* 10). Justin said that it was believed that "Alexander himself was not unaware of the plot to murder his father" (Justin 9.7.1). It is important to note that the sources do not give a reason for the purported degeneration in the relationship between Alexander and Philip. They do, though, cite two events as proof of the disintegrating relationship: Attalus' wish for a real heir at the wedding of Philip and Cleopatra, and the Pixodarus affair.

Attalus' comment about a real heir was a point of dissent between father and son. It does not seem as if the actual marriage was the problem, but Attalus' prompting of Alexander's insecurity. Alexander fled after this, but was persuaded to return to Macedon, at the behest of his father, to reconcile. Philip's reaction in the situation was inconsistent with his usual regard for his son. It was apparent that Philip was grooming Alexander as heir. Largely an absentee father, out on campaign much of the time, he asked Aristotle to groom and discipline his son. Philip later showed his trust and faith in his son by appointing him regent of Macedon during his absence when Alexander was just sixteen, and, two years later, by having him lead the left charge at the battle of Chaeronea.³ Furthermore, Philip also commissioned a tholos structure to be built at Olympia with chryselephantine statues of himself, his parents, Amyntas and Eurydice, Olympias and Alexander (Fredericksmeier 307). This in itself is a telling sign of Alexander's imminent succession.

The Pixodarus affair also reinforced the idea of Alexander's eventual succession. Philip's reaction in the Pixodarus affair seems more of a fatherly reaction and a purposefully political one. It seems Philip was not trying to undermine Alexander's basis of support, but to ensure Alexander's strong position as future king with a good marriage alliance. Philip was telling his son that as heir he had to aim higher in marriage, and then sent away the friends of his son he found to be bad influences that led him to make misguided decisions. He did so to protect him, and to protect his relationship with him, as the friends seemed to be arousing in Alexander a distrust of his father. He did

³ Plutarch. *Alex.* 9; Diodorus 16.86.

not want his son, the future king, to be listening to bad advice from bad influences. In any event, this episode does seem to indicate that Philip fully intended Alexander to succeed him as king.

Even on the day of his death, Philip honoured Alexander by choosing him to march beside him into the theatre at Aegae, along with the groom, in front of the many and varied distinguished people gathered there for the occasion (Justin 9.6.3). Evidently, on the eve of his departure for Asia, Philip wanted to demonstrate the good relationship between him and his son, and show the succession as secure, and the successor was Alexander. That Alexander's eventual succession was Philip's intention is also evident in Alexander's succession, and Antipater's role in it. Antipater had been Philip's close friend and advisor from youth, and this has not changed in the time before Philip's murder (Frears 129). Upon Philip's death, it was Antipater who quickly put Alexander up as king, and his "alacrity in arranging the accession of Alexander can best be interpreted as the execution of a contingency plan created by Philip and himself in case of the king's sudden death" (Frears 130).

Also important is the question of timing. Those who believe in the duplicity of Alexander and Olympias believe the timing of Philip's assassination was perfect, because of Olympias' position in the court was losing importance, and because Alexander's relationship with his father was falling apart. Conversely, it seems that "the timing of the real crime was nearly disastrous for him, yet he could easily have arranged Philip's death in battle and avoided such upset [. . . but] Alexander's involvement in his father's murder at any level is difficult to accept because of his traditional religious beliefs" (Carney 1992: 185). Alexander honoured Philip after his death, not as one who resented him, but as one who cared for and respected him. When he began his reign "Alexander set a perfect example of filial piety; the execution of his father's murderers, the celebration of his funeral rite, and the continuation of his work" (Frears 135). It seems that Alexander did not choose the timing of his father's death, and had no part in Philip's murder.

There was yet another man who could have wanted Philip dead, one who could legitimately reclaim the throne, after all, it had been his father's as well as his own in his youth: this was Amyntas IV. A man for whom "Philip had acted as regent, and who had at that time been recognized as king [. . . until Philip was elected king] whom Philip had allowed to live as a private citizen" (Badian 244). Evidently, Philip did not foresee any form of duplicity by Amyntas, and did not find Amyntas a threat to himself or to his son. Philip even married Amyntas to one of his daughters with no complaint by Olympias or Alexander that was passed down to us (Badian 244). Although he may have had the best motive to be Philip's killer, there is absolutely no evidence even mentioning him in connection to the event. Although we do know that after Philip's death "all Macedonia was festering with revolt and looking toward Amyntas and the children of Areopus."⁴

Later, though, Alexander is recorded as saying that "Amyntas, [his] own cousin, in Macedonia made an impious plot against [his] life, joining with [Attalus] as an ally and an accomplice" (Curtius 6.9.17). Yet one would think that if there was such a plan, Alexander's general Ptolemy would have

known about it and Arrian would then have recorded it in his history of Alexander as a legitimate threat to his position. Thus there must have been some dissent from the Amyntas camp, perhaps supported by nobles who wanted a fully Macedonian heir, but its relative absence in the sources serves as an indication that it was probably not a big threat to either Philip or Alexander.

The assassination of Philip II occurred at the wedding feast of Cleopatra and Alexander of Epirus, an occasion that many guests, foreign and native, attended. Any of the guests, both the suspects named, or someone not suspected, could have been responsible for the death. Pausanias was probably not silent about the outrage he had suffered. In many a drinking party could he have found a sympathetic and interested ear to his complaints. This ear could have been that of the Lycestians, or Olympias, or Alexander, or a Persian spy, or Attalus, or someone else. Of course, it is possible that Pausanias may have complained but simply been ignored by people sick of hearing his lamentable story. As we have seen, any claim to outside complicity in Pausanias' murder of Philip is based on perceived motive and character judgements. It is important not to analyse ancient history in the light of modern presuppositions. Motives seen as valid in ancient times were seen to be valid for a reason, because there is a high probability that they were. Nonetheless, the distinction between a good motive and actual guilt must be made; they are not equivalent, and the former is not necessarily conducive to the latter.

Outside of Pausanias, we do not know who else, if anyone, killed Philip. Pausanias' motive is clear and strong; he probably had enough anger and resentment in him to do the deed on his own, but probably would not have rejected any conspirator who wanted to join him. The Lycestian brothers were seen as accomplices by their contemporaries, and had political motives that do not make the ancient assertions unrealistic. On the other hand, Olympias was suspected in ancient times, a suspicion mainly based on her role in politics, and playing in politics as a female under male rules. The person with the best motive and most fiery and irascible personality is not necessarily the one who actually went ahead and killed Philip. Alexander's part in his father's murder is doubtful. The ancients never suspected Amyntas, who probably did not take part in the murder. Philip II was killed by Pausanias in 336 BC upon a valid motive, perhaps with the help of the Lyncestian brothers, or perhaps in a situation masterminded by Persia, but seemingly without the help or suggestion of Olympias, Alexander and Amyntas.

⁴ Plutarch *de Alex. fort.* 327c in Elizabeth Carney, "Alexander the Lyncestian: the Disloyal Opposition." *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies* 21 (1980): 29.

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